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ABSTRACT

The geography of education is a field which is generally neglected by geographers, despite the large number involved in education. This paper offers a conceptual framework for such studies emphasizing educational planning. Within the area of human geography are at least three possibilities for the geography of education: the geographical examination of factors underlying education, the examination of the spatial patterns of educational phenomena, and the role of education as a factor influencing the geographical patterns of other social and cultural phenomena. Though some work has been done in the first area by non-geographers, more could be done to relate the physical and human environment to educational phenomena. Analysis of spatial patterns of educational phenomena has just begun. Patterning of education values, attitudes, and opportunities could produce valuable planning data. In the third area, research indicates that education effects human perception of the environment, which ultimately shapes that environment. There are vast implications here for economic considerations in educational planning. This conceptual outline should help to stimulate interest in the geography of education and educational planning. (References are appended.) (JH)

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THE GEOGRAPHY OF EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

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The geography of education is a generally neglected field of study to which increased attention, not least from geographers interested in educational planning, is long overdue. This paper attempts to elaborate the beginnings of a viable conceptual framework for such studies with particular reference to educational planning.

The relatively small role in educational planning so far played by geographers compares unfavourably with that already being played by experts in other social disciplines. The virtually non-existent contribution of a sub-discipline concerned with the geography compares even more unfavourably with the already important contributions of educational sociology, the economics of education and other similar areas of study. That the geographer's contribution to educational planning should be so limited is particularly paradoxical in view of the very high proportion of geographers in most countries who devote themselves on graduation either to education or to planning.

The development of the geography of education is particularly pertinent to the potential contribution of geography to educational planning. The dearth of interest revealed by academic geographers up to the present in the possibilities of the geography of education also contrasts unfavourably, as will emerge below, with the considerable but generally unsophisticated interest

in its potential already evinced by experts in other related fields of educational inquiry (e.g. Bereday, 1964, Ch.I).

Within the broad area of human geography, the scope of the geography of education overlaps, through its inextricable involvement in the fabric of society, with those of social and cultural geography. It is concerned with obvious questions related to the provision of colleges, schools and other educational institutions. It should also be seen to extend to many other areas within the accepted purview of academic education, including the examination of geographical aspects of educational norms and attitudes, of the concept of educability and of the related fields of educational opportunity and achievement.

In all these areas possibilities exist for studies throughout a range of scales, from macro-studies of world patterns, through studies at continental and national levels, to possibilities of regional, local and even individual institutional levels. Moreover, educational phenomena are amenable to geographical studies not only of a static nature, whether related to present, past, prognosticated or postulated theoretical areas, but also to themes related to the dynamics of developing geographical patterns.

These possibilities for the geography of education may usefully by classified within the framework of a three fold subdivision as follows:

1) the geographical examination of factors underlying education,
2) the examination of the spatial patterns of educational phenomena,
3) the role of education as a factor influencing the geographical patterns of other social and cultural phenomena.

The remainder of this paper is concerned with some exploration of the possibilities in each of these categories, with particular reference to educational planning. It is illustrated as far as possible by pertinent studies already in existence and by suggestions for further research.

First, the geographical examination of factors affecting the development of education is of obvious relevance to educational planners concerned with the

practical implementation of educational policies. Spatial variations inevitably exist in requirements for the provision of educational facilities and these have the same kind of differential relationships to aspects of the human and physical environment as is shown by other social phenomena which have long been subjected to detailed geographical examination. However, work in this field has so far been done mainly by non-geographers, notably comparative educationists and, while it demonstrates possibilities, it has been largely restricted to the application of concepts which most geographers would now consider to be outdated and crudely deterministic (e.g. Hans, 1950, Ch. III). Thus the term "geographical factors", denoting essentially control by the physical environment, is not uncommon (see Simons, 1966). Yet fields of possible pertinent research are evident, concerned with geographical analysis of the relationship of educational phenomena to aspects of both the physical environment - e.g. climate and weather, relief and morphology, the availability of resources - and the human environment - e.g. patterns of population, social and economic organization, and political and administrative structures. Thus possible studies to which geographers could make a valuable contribution include consideration of factors related to the development of distinctive national education systems in different parts of the world and to regional modifications made to these systems in the light of the different ecosystems of which they form a part. Similarly, as some existing studies show, local and regional problems related to the location of schools and colleges and to the delimitation of their catchment areas offer scope for further useful work (e.g. Philbrick, 1949; Marklund, 1969; Yeates, 1963).

Second, problems related to the nature of spatial patterns created by educational phenomena themselves may be seen to offer a most fruitful and pertinent field for research. These patterns should be part of the basic social data upon which realistic educational planning is built and, although educational planners have largely neglected them until recently, they are becoming increasingly

aware of their importance, for example, in France and The Netherlands (O.E.C.D. 1969, Vol.II Ch III; Ruiter, 1969). The first need in this area, the mapping and analysis of existing official statistical data related to education, has barely begun. Yet what has been attempted has already proved to be remarkably revealing, despite the limited nature of data used (e.g. Ferrez, 1961; Gautier, 1964; Goldblatt, 1968; Coates and Rawstron, 1971, Ch X).

The collection and mapping of further data and its analysis and explanation offer an area of study of great importance as yet relatively untouched by geographers. Thus, educational values and attitudes vary spatially not only from country to country but also within countries. Sociological, psychological and comparative studies already undertaken reveal some of the possibilities of this field of analysis (e.g. Husen, 1967, Vol.I, Ch VI). The area of educability is no less promising field for geographical work. Thus, for example, psychological enquiries have referred to intriguing spatial variations in the distribution of intelligence and personality characteristics (see Vernon, 1969; Price-Williams, 1969). Similarly sociologists, uncovering variations related to social class, have noted considerable inter-urban, urban/rural and regional disparities (e.g. Moser & Scott, 1961; Wiseman, 1964; Taylor & Ayres, 1969). These and similar findings point the way to geographical studies of a more systematic nature which could be of considerable significance in the detailed planning of the location of educational provision.

Also, within this proposed second subdivision of the geography of education, are questions relating to the spatial patterns of educational opportunity and achievement. These are difficult to separate from each other since the latter depend to a large extent on the former. Some material is available with regard to spatial aspects of the provision of educational facilities, both institutional and curricular, and enormous, perplexing and, from the point of view of educational planning, highly significant variations in space have already been revealed (Conant, 1967; Geipel, 1968; Coates & Rawstron, 1971). Yet, once

again in these areas, even preliminar description and mapping of data, let alone their analysis and explanation, have hardly begun.

Turning finally to the effects of education upon the geography of different parts of the world, these may be seen to be essentially concerned with education's part in forming individual and group perceptions of environments and, consequently, of the uses to which these can be put. Such a view, exemplified, for instance, by the role of the Danish Folk High Schools in the development of Denmark since the mid-Nineteenth Century, lies at the heart of spatial differences of political, economic, social and cultural phenomena over the earth's surface. Seen in this way, the educational process appears to be a shaper of intellectual capital or resource which, when acquired, is applied differentially through time and space on given environments. Economic aspects of education, looked at from this point of view, have been central to much work related to educational planning, especially in the last decade (stemming from Schultz, 1961). Geographical aspects, already touched on in some of the work done by economists and educational planners, should also prove to be of interest and value (see Harbison & Myers, 1964).

Thus in conclusion, within each part of the conceptual framework suggested in this paper for the geography of education, numerous possibilities appear to exist for research related directly or indirectly to matters of undoubted concern in educational planning. Some of the avenues suggested are already beginning to be explored but there would appear to be a need for much more emphasis on this field.

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